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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

September 1985

The Group to Establish Trust--Peaceniks Inside the USSR

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Summary

In June 1982 a small group of Soviet scientists, engineers and physicians launched an unofficial "peace" movement. Membership in the fledgling organization, which called itself the Group to Establish Trust between the US and USSR, reportedly climbed quickly to a few thousand. As with any independent or dissident group the regime moved quickly to squelch it. Most of the leading activists of the Trust Group are now abroad, in labor camps, or prison, effectively decapitating it at least for now. The fate of this group is a case study of the development of dissidence and its suppression in the USSR.

The regime's actions toward the Trust Group reflect the intensified repression of dissidents that began with the signing of the Helsinki Accords in 1975, and increased in the wake of Western condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The regime's attitude also is conditioned by the fear that pacifist tendencies are growing, particularly among young people, and concern that the peace issue might become a new focus of dissident attachment in the USSR.

Although the Trust Group has been battered, it will be difficult to completely extinguish antiwar

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agitation inside the USSR. It will draw strength from the widespread fear of nuclear war, growing disenchantment with the war in Afghanistan, even the regime's own peace propaganda. [redacted]

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In 1982 a fledgling unofficial Soviet peace group succeeded in capturing the attention of some Western observers and even in gathering some limited popular support inside the USSR. The regime harshly repressed the internal peace group, which by mid-1985 had become fragmented and largely inactive. [redacted]

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The Trust Group

The Group to Establish Trust Between the USSR and the USA (Trust Group) was founded as an independent peace group in Moscow in June 1982 by a dozen scientists, engineers and artists. The group had developed out of an unofficial seminar conducted by Moscow intellectuals that focused on group behavior and psychology. In their decision to focus their efforts on disarmament, members of the group were undoubtedly influenced by the growth of the West European peace movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s. [redacted]

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In its founding appeal, the Trust Group called for a "four-sided dialogue" on peace between the peoples and governments of the United States and USSR. The Group called for disarmament in both the East and West, for a free flow of information on questions of disarmament between the Soviet Union and the West, and for unrestricted movement across national borders of people involved in working for peace. The Trust Group claimed to have advanced numerous proposals for building bridges between ordinary people in the East and West, in order to foster a climate for disarmament. [redacted]

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The group maintained a nucleus of only about a dozen members--referred to as the coordinating committee--but it claimed a thousand supporters in Moscow alone. According to a group leader, most of its supporters were between the ages of twenty and thirty years old and many were students. Many of the founding members of the group were "refuseniks," Jews who have been refused permission to emigrate. [redacted]

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Although the Moscow group had the most visibility, there were others in Leningrad, Odessa, Novosibirsk and Riga. Information on the activities of the outlying groups is sketchy. The Odessa group, for example, circulated a document proposing that all military ships and coastal militia installations be removed from the Black Sea, but since the reported arrest of the document's author there has been no news of other activity from this regional group. The apparent lack of coordination among the

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[redacted]

different groups probably hinders the authorities' efforts to eliminate them, but it also severely limits the impact of their dissident activities. [redacted]

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Parallel Groups. The Trust Group worked informally with Independent Initiative, a loose network of Soviet-style hippies and pacifists who exhibit their rejection of official Soviet values by holding annual commemorations of the anniversary of John Lennon's death. The Independent Initiative Group took a more radical stand than the Trust Group in protesting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, capital punishment, and compulsory military service. Another group of pacifists, called "Good Will," held demonstrations in 1983 and 1984 and many of the participants were arrested. Since June 1984 there has been no further reporting on the group. [redacted]

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Some other Soviet unofficial peace groups also evidently cropped up. Dissident sources report that last fall four young researchers at the Moscow Physical Engineering Institute were detained at work by the KGB for creating an unofficial group within the institute's Komsomol organization to conduct independent studies in philosophy and peace. One of those detained reportedly attempted to establish contact with a diplomat at the Indian Embassy in Moscow, and through him, to peace organizations abroad. [redacted]

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Trust-Group Tactics

The Trust Group began as a discussion group, holding a weekly "Sunday Seminar" at members' homes to discuss nuclear disarmament. Reporting from the US Embassy in Moscow suggests that when the seminars began to stimulate interest among young Soviets, the regime moved to break up the meetings. [redacted]

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The group then resorted to more daring activity, consciously seeking to provoke the regime as a way of publicizing its views, gaining the attention of Western observers and ultimately of influencing public opinion inside the USSR. The Trust Group, for example, called a press conference for foreign correspondents to announce its founding and released a document that not only set forth the purpose of the organization but also provided a list of members and their addresses. Other tactics by the Group have included:

Petitions and Leaflets. In July 1982 a group member was arrested and charged with anti-Soviet propaganda for trying to obtain the signatures of Siberian workers on a petition for disarmament. In May 1984 the group led a petition drive in support of a summit meeting between US and Soviet leaders. This petition reportedly gained 600 signatures. Efforts by the group

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to obtain more signatures led to the arrest of one of the leaders. In October 1984 the group presented US Embassy officials with an open letter addressed to both President Reagan and then General Secretary Chernenko proposing to establish inter-governmental programs to work on global problems. In February 1985 the group sent a petition to the official Soviet Peace Committee calling for the organization to participate in a rally seeking the release of two imprisoned group members. The group also generated numerous public "appeals" and leaflets.

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Demonstrations. The group had publicly announced its "schedule" for demonstrations in order to gain attention. For example, according to the US Embassy in Moscow, members of the group invited the Soviet Peace Committee to join them and an American tourist associated with US peace groups to participate in passing out peace buttons and "pen-pals for peace" brochures at a metro station in January 1985. Embassy officials and other Western observers, alerted to the scheduled demonstration, reported that when the members of the Trust Group showed up they were met by plain clothes police, who detained the group members. Another demonstration was to be held in May 1985, but nearly all the members were either detained or arrested beforehand. The detentions did, however, receive publicity in the foreign press. [redacted]

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Hunger strikes. In February 1983, two activists began a hunger strike to protest police surveillance of group members' apartments. The hunger strike lasted for a month and was ended at the behest of a European disarmament group. The rearrest of a group leader in September 1984 for reportedly disobeying a militiaman prompted a hunger strike by another group member. The member was transferred to a hospital and subsequently released.

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[redacted]

Art Exhibitions. In its first year the group tried to promote pacifist ideas by holding art exhibitions on anti-war themes in members' apartments. These exhibitions were broken up by the authorities. The most prominent participants were arrested and the art exhibits confiscated. [redacted]

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Western Connections

Many of these Group initiatives have been designed to increase the group's visibility abroad. In addition to the activities described above the Group has made numerous attempts to attract the support of Western peace groups, with some success:

- In 1982 the Group began correspondence with the European Nuclear Disarmament (END) Group in London.

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- In May 1983 the Group met with members of the British Greenham Common peace group.
- In October 1983 the Group succeeded in getting a Dutch peace organization to publicly plead for the release of a jailed Soviet group leader. (The Soviets did not release the peace group member.)
- In April 1984 members of a visiting West German peace group invited the Group to meet with the official Soviet Peace Committee (which of course declined the opportunity).
- In May 1985 activists from a Dutch peace group joined the Group in an attempted peace rally. [redacted]

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The Trust Group maintained contact with Helsinki Watch Groups abroad (unofficial organizations who monitor compliance with the human rights provisions of the 1975 Helsinki Accords by governments who signed the accords). It also asks travelers to the USSR to bring in peace buttons and posters, and attempts to persuade Western peace groups to print Russian language posters and flyers. The Group carries on activities abroad, especially in New York, through emigres who are active in the movement. [redacted]

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Regime Reaction

In dealing with the Trust Group the regime has used the full panoply of tactics for suppressing dissent. Group leaders have been exiled, arrested, or confined in psychiatric hospitals. Foreigners who have met with Group members inside the USSR have been questioned by the KGB and warned away from further contacts. Repression has all but eliminated the Group inside the USSR, although some emigres publish an international news bulletin on the Soviet independent peace movement drawing information from the few contacts remaining inside. [redacted]

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The Fate of Soviet Pacifists

As a result of regime repression, most of the leading activists of the Trust Group are now abroad or in labor camp or prison:

- *Founding member Mikhail Ostrovsky, exiled abroad--within a month of the Group's formation in June 1982.*

- Several other original members, including Yuriy Medvedkov and Yuriy Khronopulo, arrested in 1982 and served 15-day jail sentences. Khronopulo withdrew from the Trust Group but rejoined it in early 1985. Medvedkov detained by the KGB in May 1985.
- Oleg Radzinskiy, a young teacher, first detailed in July 1982, convicted in October 1983 on unknown charges, sentenced to five years internal exile. He recanted, reportedly under KGB pressure.
- Aleksandr Shatravka and Vladimir Mishchenko, arrested in July 1982, sentenced in April 1983 to three and one year respectively for slandering the Soviet regime. Shatravka sentenced in February 1985 to an additional five years of labor camp on narcotics charges.
- Sergey Batovrin, another founder, one of ten refusenik members of the Trust Group, given permission or forced to leave the USSR. Since 1983 conducting activities from his home in New York.
- Kirill Popov a prominent human rights activist also involved with the Trust Group, arrested in June 1985, awaiting trial on unknown charges.
- Other refusenik members of the Group--previously under periodic detention or house arrest granted exit visas: Mikhail and Ludmilla Ostrovsky, Lyubov Potekhina, (Batovrin's mother), Valery Godyak, Vladimir and Mariya Fleishgakker, Mark Reitman, Lev Dudkin and Vitaliy Barbash.
- Olga Kabonov and Natalya Akulyonok, high school students and new Group members, detained for two weeks in a psychiatric hospital in June 1985.
- Vladimir Brodsky, a physician, earlier received several 15-day sentences, arrested on 17 July 1985, awaiting trial on charges of "aggravated hooliganism."
- Nikolay Khramov, detained two days before the July 1985 Youth Festival, confined in Venereological Hospital Number 1 in Moscow.

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Several factors have caused Soviet leaders to regard the Trust Group with concern. The speeches of some high-level military spokesman, for example, including the Defense Minister and the Chief of the General Staff, have suggested concern that patriotism is weakening among young people and that this is having an adverse effect on the morale of military conscripts.

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Considerable evidence suggests that in recent years there has been an increase in pacifist sentiment among the Soviet population, especially among youth. In 1982, for example, when Yuriy Andropov was party leader, he reportedly told Polish security officials that Soviet youth were becoming increasingly apolitical and pacifist.

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The regime may fear that Soviet "peaceniks" could tap sentiments against the Afghan war. Recent unofficial opinion polls--conducted by [redacted] USIA and others--indicate that Soviet support for the war has declined sharply since 1980. In May 1985, according to reliable sources of the US Embassy in Moscow, demonstrations against the Afghan war occurred in Tbilisi and Yerevan, capitals of the Georgian and Armenian republics respectively. These sources believed they were among the largest anti-war demonstrations ever in the USSR.

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By soliciting the support of Western peace groups, the Trust Group probably stimulated regime apprehension about the growing tendency of elements of the Western peace movement to target Soviet policies for criticism. Reporting over the past several years has indicated substantial disappointment within the Soviet active measures apparatus about the declining influence within the peace movement of Soviet-controlled front groups such as the World Peace Council. The chairman of the Soviet Committee for the Defense of Peace has expressed concern about non-Communist peace groups undercutting the Soviet propaganda position.

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The regime's harshly repressive actions toward the Trust Group, flow not only from such policy considerations but reflect its own problems of internal control. The party, aware of its own evolution from a small conspiratorial group to a powerful organization capable of engineering a revolution feels it cannot afford to tolerate any spontaneous activity on the part of dissident elements in society.

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The Trust Group has been fragmented and virtually eliminated. It has provided, however, a new focus of dissident

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attachment in the USSR--peace. As with other types of dissent and in view of widespread popular fear of nuclear war, repression of the Trust Group probably does not signify the end of antiwar agitation. [REDACTED]

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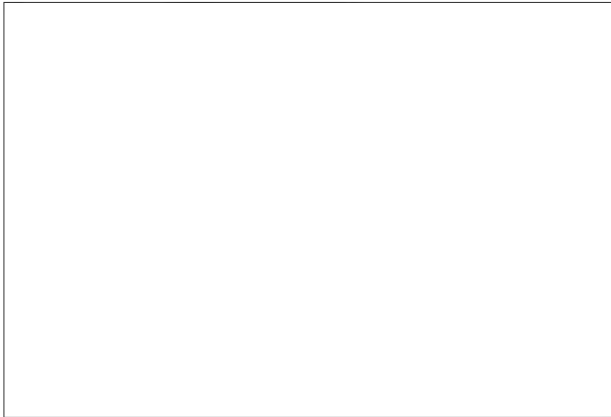
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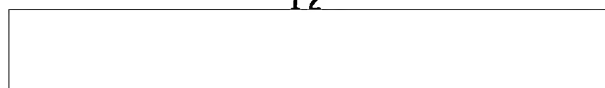
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